

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 IO-03 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-10

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-14

USIA-04 OMB-01 NIC-01 AID-05 SAB-01 SAM-01 SCCT-01

CIEP-01 EUR-10 DRC-01 /078 W
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R 101625Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 737

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 12321

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT LE

SUBJ: LEBANESE CABINET CRISIS

REF: BEIRUT 12187 AND 12035

1. SEVEN DAYS AFTER ACCEPTING MANDATE FROM PRES FRANGIE TO FORM NEW CABINET, SAEB SALAM'S EFFORTS TO PUT TOGETHER AN ACCEPTABLE TEAM ARE STILL DRAGGING ON. WE UNDERSTAND HE HAS SUBMITTED THREE SEPARATE LISTS OF PROPOSED MINISTERS TO FRANGIE DURING PAST WEEK, BUT THAT EACH TIME PRESIDENT WAS NOT FULLY SATISFIED AND ASKED SALAM TO KEEP TRYING. HE STILL HAS HIS HAT IN RING, BUT THERE ARE SIGNS HE EXPERIENCING GROWING FRUSTRATION OVER HIS INABILITY TO SATISFY FRANGIE, STRIKE BALANCE BETWEEN CONFLICTING PRESSURES BROUGHT TO BEAR ON HIM BY COMPETING POLITICAL FACTIONS, AND OVERCOME OTTHER OBSTACLES REFERRED TO IN REFTELS.

2. WE RELIABLY INFORMED THAT SALAM, IN UNDERTAKING TO FORM NEW
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CABINET, WAS DETERMINED TO PICK A TEAM THAT, IN EYES OF LEBANESE

PUBLIC OPINION AT LEAST, WOULD BE MORE COMPETENT AND EFFECTIVE THAN EX-PRIMIN SOLH'S MOTLEY COLLECTION OF TIRED, "DO-NOTHING" PARLIAMENTARIANS. PART OF HIS STRATEGY, AS NOTED REFEELS, WAS TO INCLUDE SEVERAL NON-PARLIAMENTARY FIGURES (I.E., YOUNGER "TECHNOCRATS") IN NEW CABINET IN ORDER REDUCE ITS "TRADITIONALIST" IMAGE.

3. UNFORTUNATELY FOR SALAM, HIS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THIS HAVE RUN INTO TROUBLE IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT RESPECTS, FIRST BEING THAT PRES RANGE-- IN CONTRAST TO HIS POSITION IN 1970--NO LONGER COMMANDS SUFFICIENT PRESTIGE TO SHIELD SUCH CABINET FROM CRITICISM AND LOGROLLING OPPOSITION FROM VARIOUS "TRADITIONAL" POLITICIANS (E.G., JUMBLATT, CHAMOUN, GEMAYEL, ETC.) WHO STAND TO BE DISAPPOINTED IN THEIR SHARE OF POSTS IN SUCH A CABINET. SECONDLY, WE BELIEVE FRANGIE HIMSELF MAY BE CONCERNED THAT SALAM'S NEW-FOUND ALLIANCE WITH KARAME, EDDE AND IMAM MUSA AS SADR IS POTENTIAL THREAT TO HIS OWN POWER AND INFLUENCE AS PRESIDENT. (SHOULD BE NOTED THAT SALAM AND KARAME, BETWEEN THEM, CONTROL BULK OF SUNNI MOSLEM "STREET" ELEMENTS IN URBAN AREAS, AND THAT IMAN SADR CAN LEND ADDITIONAL WEIGHT BY VIRTUE OF HIS GRASSROOTS APPEAL TO MAJORITY OF LEBANON'S SHI'A.) IN ADDITION, SALAM, BY JOINING NEW ALLIANCE WITH KARAME, EDDE AND IMAM SADR, HAS TENDED TO ISOLATE HIMSELF FROM SOME OF HIS FORMER POLITICAL FRIENDS, PARTICULARLY POWERFUL CHRISTIAN BLOCS LED BY CHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL ALTHOUGH CHAMOUN NOW SEEMS TO BE SUPPORT SALAAM. IN EFFECT, HE CURRENTLY IS HAVING HARD TIME IN PRESERVING THEIR SUPPORT THROUGH CUSTOMARY POLITICAL CONCESSIONS RE KEY CABINET POSITIONS AND IN ENDEAVORING, AT SAME TIME, TO ASSOCIATE HIMSELF WITH DEMANDS BEING LEVELLED BY KARAME, EDDE AND IMAM SADR.

4. THIS SITUATION CANNOT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY AND SOMETHING WILL HAVE TO "GIVE" IN DAYS IMMEDIATELY AHEAD.
GODLEY

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